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ABSTRACT

A Pilot Project Proposal, presented to the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service, was carried on from June 15, 1970 to September 5, 1970. The proposal contained a design for an action research program to be conducted among black teen-age males of the South Park Area in Tucson, Arizona. The purpose of the project was to gather data from the area which would enable the Extension Service to design programs which would: (1) create a positive image of University of Arizona 4-H Clubs among minority groups; (2) identify and develop indigenous leadership to serve minority neighborhoods; and, (3) assimilate cultural variance into the larger 4-H membership. Two general goals were established for the research project itself: (1) to discover the reasons for past successes or failures of youth programs designed for black teen-age males in greatly depressed urban areas, specifically the South Park Area of Tucson, and (2) after identification of the reasons for past successes or failures, to evaluate the possibility of a viable program which would appeal to and atract the target population. As a result of the findings of the Pilot Project, several recommendations are made for introducing a program for the poor. (Author)

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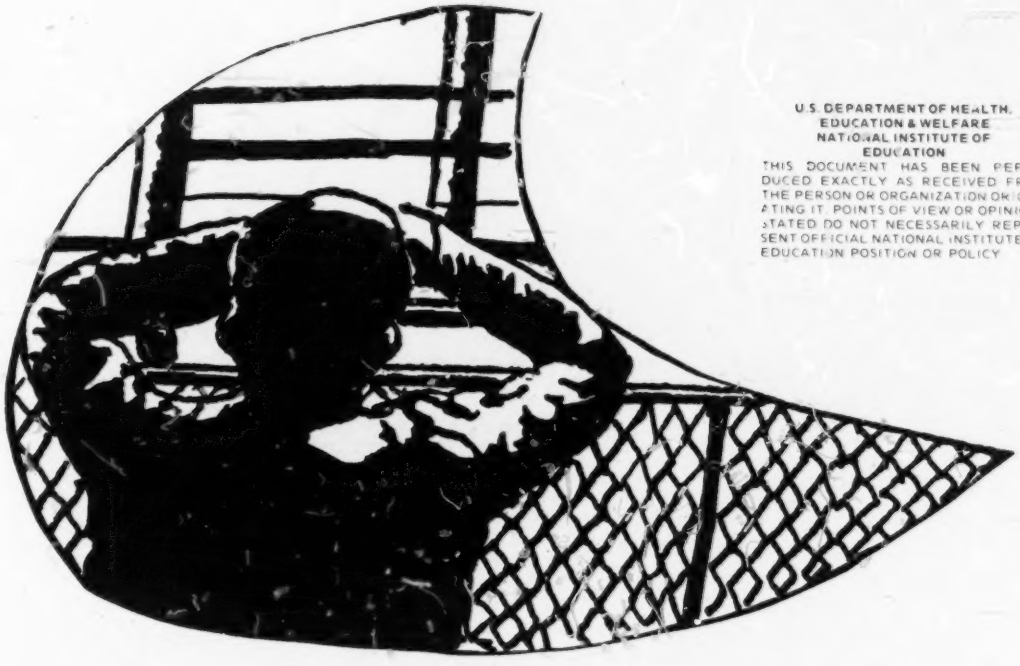
IF YOU'RE YOUNG AND BLACK...

A report of a summer program with black male youth in Tucson, Arizona, with recommendations for program development



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Tucson

ED 079445

IF YOU'RE YOUNG AND BLACK...

by

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and

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Series P--22

Issued in furtherance of cooperative exten- n work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. George E. Hull, Director of Extension Service, The University of Arizona College of Agriculture, Tucson, Arizona. 500–May, 1971.

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The original report included detailed description and evaluation of the methods employed, a compilation of the interview data, and narrative accounts of daily activities.

These have been deleted in this report for the sake of economy. For those wishing to study the approach in more detail access to the original report may be gained upon approval of your written request.

Thanks

The Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Arizona made possible this report both by a grant of funds and the continuing support of its personnel during the time of research. To the Cooperative Extension Service, we offer our congratulations and sincere gratitude.

It is never possible to name all the people who contributed to the final culmination of any research project. There are several people to whom we owe special thanks. Ron Randolph and Tim Wells, the work-study students with whom we worked most closely, contributed more than they will ever know. Charles Martin and Phil Lewis, both of the Cooperative Extension Service, provided constant support and sources of help without which many details of the action program would never have taken place. We wish to make special mention of Sara Hodges who typed and corrected the notes and manuscript for the original report.

To all who helped in any way make this work possible, thank you.

Charles C. Brown
Damaris Bradish
September 4, 1970

The Beginning

In April 1970, a Pilot Project Proposal was prepared and presented to the Arizona Cooperative Extension Service. This proposal contained a design for an action research program to be conducted among black teen-age males of the South Park Area in Tucson, Arizona. The purpose of the project was to gather data from the area which would enable the Extension Service to design programs which would:

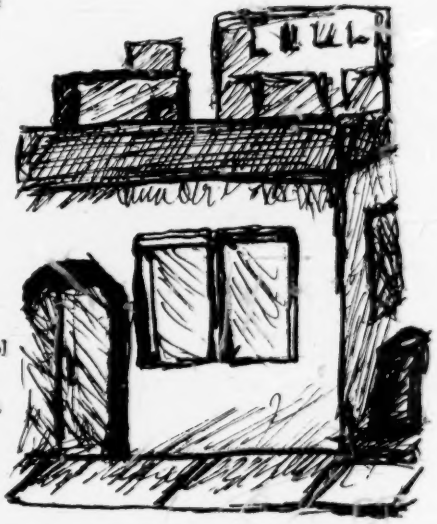
1. Create a positive image of University of Arizona 4-H Clubs among minority groups.
2. Identify and develop indigenous leadership to serve minority neighborhoods.
3. Assimilate cultural variance into the larger 4-H membership.

To conduct the action research the senior author of this report was employed by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service. The project was carried on from June 15, 1970 to September 5, 1970.

Two general goals were established for the research project itself:

1. To discover the reasons for past successes or failures of youth programs designed for black teen-age males in greatly depressed urban areas, specifically the South Park Area of Tucson.
2. After identification of the reasons for past successes or failures, to evaluate the possibility of a viable program which would appeal to and attract the target population.

To obtain the data necessary for this report several different methods were employed. One of these methods was a participant-observer approach. To facilitate participation and to provide a check on observation two young black work-study students of the University of Arizona were employed. One of the students was with the project only the first two weeks. The other student remained during the entire period of the research. These students made entry possible into groups of black males, which would otherwise have been difficult. They provided a most valuable source of interpretation as the data began to accumulate.



Through the participant-observer approach the researcher was able to gather data from groups of young males in Mirasol Park, at the Holy Cross House, Mirasol Center, A-Mountain Area Council, Pueblo del Vista Center and Park, and the Road Runner Boy's Club of the A-Mountain area.

In addition to the participant-observer approach, formal interviews were conducted with those who either had conducted or presently were conducting programs for youth in both the South Park area and the A-Mountain area. Toward the end of the project interviews were also held with the heads of three families in the A-Mountain area.

Moreover, a camp-out was initiated among the members of the A-Mountain Boys' Club to test certain assumptions and procedures, the results of which are contained in the chapter on "Findings."

Finally, discussions were held with some of the leaders of organizations engaged in activities for blacks, such as Model Cities and the Neighborhood Youth Council. These people assured us of their support wherever needed.

The project was originally intended to be limited to the South Park area of Tucson. However, at the outset we discovered a newly-organized boys' club in the A-Mountain area. It was found advantageous to gain access to this boys' club for purposes of comparison

between the South Park and A-Mountain areas. The A-Mountain area may be considered economically more advanced than the South Park area.

The project was generally limited to research among black teen-age males. However, extensive research was conducted among black males over the age of twenty in the South Park area. From this group, data was gathered about leadership among black youth.[1]

Why?

A young man from the South Park area of Tucson was arrested on the charge of throwing a rock at a police cruiser. He was told that if he pleaded guilty to the charge, the penalty would be seven days in jail. The young man refused and spent almost two weeks in jail awaiting his trial. When he was asked why he refused to plead guilty and chose to spend the longer time in jail, he answered that a guilty plea would be entered on his police record, while a trial would almost certainly clear him, since he felt confident no witnesses would come forward against him nor had any of the policemen seen him throw the rock. The young man was subsequently cleared of the charge for a lack of evidence against him.

The foregoing account illustrates very aptly the use that is made almost constantly of theory in everyday life. The young man would have been surprised had he been told he was operating from a theoretical framework. People almost always act upon the basis of propositions derived from theory, though they would be hard put to articulate those propositions and even more perplexed, if asked to explain the whole thing.

In the case cited above, several general propositions immediately become evident. "When a law is violated in the presence of on-duty policemen, they will respond in an effort to apprehend the violator." "A plea of guilty will be entered on a person's police record." "Lack of evidence in a criminal case will result in acquittal." "One's friends will not come forward to testify against one." "The police will not lie under oath at a trial." "The judge will conduct the trial according to the expectations of the law."

These propositions are, in turn, derived from general theories of bureaucratic behavior and human socialization, which theories are themselves based upon a more general theory of behavior in socio-cultural systems.

All of the foregoing is intended to show the importance, and even the necessity, of a theoretical perspective in research of human behavior. If the theory used in a particular piece of research is supported by the data, a valuable tool is provided for action related to that research. All research begins with certain propositions and assumptions derived from general theory and ends either by supporting or verifying those aspects of theory or modifying the theory in the light of conflicting data.

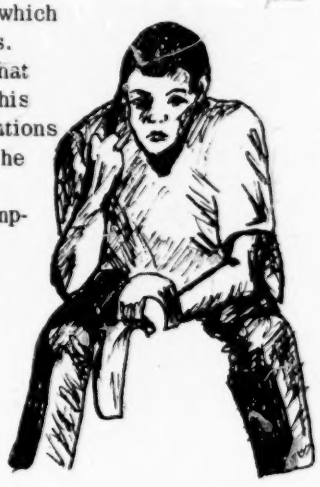
A few words must be added about the limitations inherent in a particular theoretical perspective. A theory gives direction to one's observation and the data gathering process. It tells one what to look for, since one cannot see everything at one time, and what to regard as pertinent. It has been well established that one sees and remembers what one is prepared to see and remember.[2]

It has become almost a cliche to say: "A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing." This proverb simply points up the care that must be exercised in the use of theory. One must not become so enamored of the theory that one fails to see the actual human behavior going on in front of him.

Furthermore, theory has not been so well developed that it gives final answers. Human behavior is so complex and so much conditioned by specific social setings that no theory has yet been evolved which can inevitably and with absolute accuracy account for all human behavior. Theory, at the present time, can provide generalizations; only rarely can it provide accurate specifics. Nevertheless, the generalizations are usually sufficient to facilitate effective and productive action programs with a minimum of inappropriate and harmful effects.

A Theory of Low-Income Life Styles

Sociological theory is based upon the assumption that human behavior is influenced to a significant degree by the social and cultural system within which the individual functions. This is simply to say that everyone is guided in his behavior by the expectations of those around him as he perceives those expectations. A further assumption is that people's expectations of others are highly conditioned by the various structural elements of the particular socio-cultural system in which the people in question are operating.



Translated into practical terms the foregoing paragraph may be illustrated by simple example. Almost everyone in any city of the United States expects a policeman coming upon a brawl in a public place to restore order by breaking up the brawl. This is so because of the expectations attached to the status of policemen. That most policemen will, in fact, respond to restore order in the manner described is also due to their understanding of the expectations attached to their status. A status is simply a position in a sociocultural system to which certain common expectations are attached. Ordinarily those who occupy those positions will act according to the common expectations.

In speaking about a theory of low-income life styles one must consider the social setting of low-income persons, which includes the physical environment and social system, the attitudes and aspirations characteristically resulting from a low-income social system, and the characteristic behavior patterns of low-income individuals. Here again the starting assumption is that there are significant differences in the social system of a low-income area as compared with the social system of a middle-class area. These different social systems will result in different kinds of behavior for those operating within the systems.

The physical environment of a typical urban low-income area is usually described in relation to the physical environments of middle-class areas. Middle-class areas are considered to be the average or standard for the total society. We, therefore, hear that low-income area residences are usually sub-standard or inadequate in respect to construction, utilities, privacy, comfort and convenience. We easily expect to find unpaved streets, a lack of street lighting, some yards with accumulations of junk, inadequate public recreational facilities, and proportionately fewer commercial establishments. Low-income areas can rarely, if ever, be described as physically beautiful. Reference will be made below to some of the effects of the physical environment upon behavior.

The social system of any area includes as elements certain values and norms, institutions, voluntary associations and groups, statuses and roles, and sanctions.

Oscar Lewis[3] has maintained that while low-income persons are aware of middle-class values, they seldom live by them. Such a view would imply that middle-class values are not really the values of lower-class persons. Such an implication has been disputed by several sociologists and anthropologists.[4] Since the poor are part of the American system, we may expect them to hold the same values and goals as the majority of Americans. What research seems to show is that the reasons the poor have for their values and goals and the ways they utilize to realize them will differ from middle-class persons generally.

The poor do value occupational and educational achievement, material comforts and luxuries, security, and leisure. Yet the degree to which the poor expect to realize these values is modified by all the other elements of their social system, and these same elements limit the means available for realizing the values.

Among the poor the hierarchy of values is frequently different from that of the more affluent members of society. Health is often subordinated to material needs or wants such as a car or television set. Children's leisure is often less important than increased income. There is typically a sliding scale in moral values resulting from life conditions. Marital fidelity is usually valued, but it may be subordinated to psychological or material values when these values cannot be realized otherwise. This frequently happens.

Like all other members of the American society, the poor participate in our major social institutions. Their children are usually educated in the public school system. The poor have the right to vote and are beneficiaries of our political institution. They have access to and are subject to the American legal system. The religious institution has members from all the strata of our society. The economic institution is designed to include the poor as one of its resources.

Yet, there are differences. The quality of public school education in low-income areas is frequently sub-standard when compared to that of middle-class neighborhoods. The poor rarely hold public office and exercise their franchise to vote to a smaller degree than other members of our society. They are more often found in violation of our laws and are less likely to be acquitted when charged with violations.[5] There are proportionately fewer of the poor in the high-status churches of our society. And the family structure of the poor differs from that of the middle class in the greater incidence of families with only a female head, the generally greater number of children, and the kind of affectional and instrumental relations among the family members.[6]

It is not that the poor do not participate in the major social institutions of our country. It is that their degree and manner of participation is frequently significantly different from their middle-class counterparts.

The American social system is filled with voluntary associations. There are political associations such as the League of Women Voters, civic organizations such as Rotary, benevolent groups such as the Benevolent Protective Organization of Elks, charitable groups such as the Red Cross, religious organizations such as the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Association. There are associations devoted to the family such as Planned Parenthood. There are groups for the young such as Boy and Girl Scouts. The membership in all of these organizations is voluntary. Among the functions of these groups is that of providing resources and support to their members for the purposes for which they are organized.

Among the poor areas of any city the number and kinds of voluntary associations are significantly fewer than in well-to-do areas.

A modern technological society characteristically increases the diversity of roles performed by the members of that society. In a primitive society the number of different roles played by any one person is relatively limited. A man may be both a father and a shoemaker, but he may be little else. The middle-class man in American society will usually perform a variety of roles. He may be not only a father, but also a teacher when he helps his children with homework, a bookkeeper when he balances the family budget, a driver as he maneuvers the car through city traffic, a gardener as he takes care of his yard, a carpenter or plumber when he makes repairs on his house. He will probably indulge in organized sports either as a participant or a spectator. But, what is of far greater significance is that he will indulge in activities requiring relatively specialized knowledge and skills. He will be expected to assume roles of leadership and decision-making at various times.

When a comparison is made between the repertoire of roles of the low-income person and the middle-income person, the low-income person will be found performing significantly fewer roles requiring the use of intellectual skills as well as less diverse roles generally.

And finally the poor tend to experience social sanctions differently from the more affluent. This is true of both rewards and penalties. Rarely do the poor occupy prestigious positions within society. Rarely are they able to obtain jobs that pay well or even average.

Rarely do they exercise power. On the other hand, the poor experience the presence of the police more frequently and differently from others. They find recourse to the legal system for redress of wrongs more difficult or remote. Whatever the reasons for this state of affairs, the repercussions on characteristic behavior are inevitable and predictable.

The physical environment and the social system largely influence the attitudes and aspirations of those who live within them. The physical environment and the social system of the poor as described above results in limited alternatives, a feeling of helplessness deprivation, and insecurity.[7]

The poor experience limited alternatives because of a relative lack of education, a lack of financial resources, a lack of experience. They feel helpless because of their limited skills, the absence of bargaining power, and their relative lack of power. Their deprivation is one of a lack of resources to take advantage of or even recognize opportunities. Their insecurity comes from their inability to control their own life circumstances.

Under the conditions described above, one may hardly expect the aspiration level of the poor to be very high. Because of those same conditions one may expect to find among the poor attitudes of fatalism, present orientation with a greater need for immediate gratification, a tendency toward authoritarianism, and concreteness in thought patterns. This is not to say that the poor do not make plans, or will not defer gratification, or never indulge in democratic behavior, or are completely devoid of abstract thoughts. It is to say that the former attitudes are more characteristic of the poor than the latter.

An attitude of fatalism is not conducive to planning for the future. Present orientation and the need for immediate gratification do not make people prone to risk present securities in favor of future advantages. Authoritarianism by itself is not very conducive to the development of personal independence or leadership qualities. And concreteness in thought patterns tends to limit one's understanding of the meanings behind events or the interlocking patterns or events producing the situation in which one finds oneself.

The Theory of Education

This section does not intend to elaborate a complete or detailed theory of education. What will be considered here are the sources of knowledge, attitudes and skills for low-income persons, sources of usefulness for acquired knowledge, attitudes and skills, and the probable effect of increasing knowledge and skills with a corresponding increase in utilization.

Sources of Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills:

The poor share with all the other sectors of society the same general source of knowledge, attitudes and skills. Again, the major differences between the poor and other social classes lie in the degree to which the poor have access to the sources and the means available to tap the sources.

The first source for education and personality development is the family. It is from this source that a child receives knowledge. It is from his parents and siblings or other family members that the child first begins to form the basic attitudes, which will tend to remain with him and influence him all his life. It is also from his family that the child learns such basic skills as speaking, eating, personal cleanliness patterns, manual dexterity, physical locomotion, manners, the thought process, as well as many other basic skills. To the extent that a family does not adequately provide these elements of a child's personality, to that extent the child is limited in dealing with the larger society.

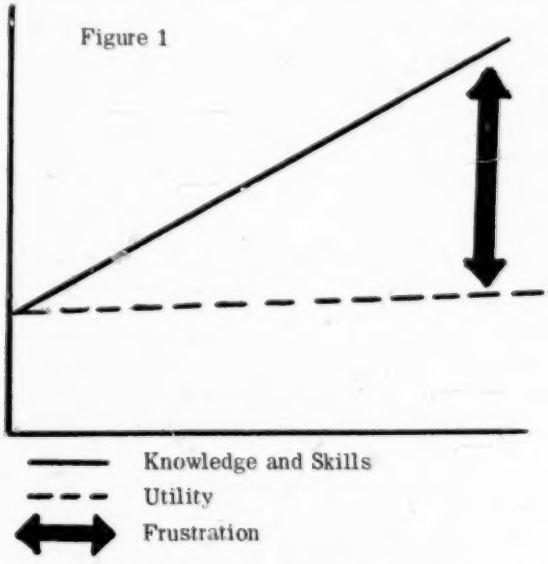
The personality development of the maturing child is continued and modified by his experiences with his peers, the school, church and other major social institutions, the mass media, particularly radio and television, and any agency program and projects as well as voluntary associations to which he may be exposed. The broader and more intimate his experiences in all these respects, the greater will be his knowledge and skills and the more his attitudes will be modified.

Knowledge and skills are of value to the individual to the degree that he can utilize them in his own life-style. The utility may consist in some material advantage, such as acquiring food, shelter, or clothing, or in some psychological advantage, such as prestige, self-image, or superiority. What appears clearly is that the individual will not seek anything which he perceives as totally useless. The acquisition of new knowledge and skills must, therefore, appear advantageous to the individual's life-style before he will make the effort to acquire them.

The general sources of utility for one's knowledge and skills will be found in one's occupational pursuits, leisure time activities, for example, hobbies, recreation, and voluntary associations, avocational pursuits, and his relations with others.

On the basis of what has been said above, we may formulate the following hypothesis. *If a person's knowledge and skills are increased without a corresponding increase in utility, the person will experience frustration which may result in withdrawal or in anger and, perhaps, violence.* This hypothesis may be illustrated as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Any program designed for the poor must be based upon certain general considerations:

1. The most effective process whereby knowledge and skills can be produced in the target population.

2. The process whereby appropriate attitudes can be formed for participation in organized projects.

3. Provision for the utilization of the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes.

These considerations will be the subject of the last section of this report.

SUMMARY

In this section of the report, we have discussed the use of a theory of low-income life-styles and a theory of education. The life-styles of the poor are conditioned by their physical environment and their social system in a way that produces limited alternatives to action.

a feeling of helplessness in many social situations, deprivation of certain resources readily available to middle-class persons, and insecurity due to an inability to control their life-circumstances.

We have postulated that the attitudes of the poor are generally colored by fatalism, an orientation to the present, authoritarianism, and concreteness in thought. We have also indicated some of the limitations such attitudes place upon the ability to act.

Finally, in our theory of education, we have stated that the participation of the poor in the sources of knowledge, attitudes, and skills differs from that of the middle classes primarily in the degree of that participation. We have also hypothesized that introducing new knowledge and skills without making adequate provision for their utilization will produce frustration leading to withdrawal or anger and, possibly, violence.

Our recommendations in the final chapter will be based both upon the theoretical perspective elaborated in this chapter and on actual findings detailed in the next chapter.

They Taught Us

The results of this research project have been divided into three categories:

1) contacts with black youth in the South Park area
2) contacts with youth in the A-Mountain area, and
3) data from interviews with individuals in both areas

Differences were noted in the attitudes and responses of the youth in the two target areas. We have attributed these differences primarily to differences in the socio-economic levels of the two areas and, secondarily to differences in age composition of the two groups studied. The differences, however, were not significant enough to prevent general conclusions about the black youth of both areas or to make two sets of recommendations necessary.

South Park Area:

Our first contact with the youth of the South Park area was with a group gathered around one of the tables in Mirasol Park. Our explanation of the reason for our presence, namely to provide our services for whatever projects they might wish to take up, was followed by an outburst of criticism directed toward whites generally, the City Parks and Recreation Department, some of the black leadership of the area, and the failure of unidentified agencies to keep the promises made to people in the area.

The vehemence of the criticism as well as its content revealed attitudes of hostility, anger, suspicion and distrust.

When asked about these attitudes later, Tim Wells, one of the work-study students on the project, said: "The guys usually try to avoid older adults. They (the adults) can't help them (the guys), so they are not important. Adults often betray kids by taking their club money. There is a distrust of all whites."

The distrust of adults was further confirmed by an incident in Mirasol Park on July 2. On that occasion an adult male joined the group at the park table. The group refused overtly to take the man's advice seriously but also gave evidence of some fear that the man would harm them with a piece of concrete he was holding in one hand.

During the entire time of the project we failed to see any occasion when youth and adults worked together in a completely voluntary manner. This isolation of youth from adult companionship is well documented in David A. Schulz's book, *Coming Up Black.*[8]

On the assumption that winning the confidence and trust of the leader of the park group would facilitate working with the group, we identified the leader, Phil,

and set about expressing interest in him and his concerns. We discovered that he had artistic abilities. Within a few days we were able to supply him with art materials. We also arranged permission from the shop at the University of Arizona for Phil to use their tools and equipment. What finally cemented Phil's trust was a visit made to Phil by the researcher, while Phil was in jail. It may be remarked here that police incidents are ordinary occurrences in the lives of most black youth in the South Park area.

It was after the jail visit that Phil appeared most friendly and open to the senior author and Tim Wells. This friendliness and acceptance made little describable difference in the behavior of the other black males. This may be accounted for by the fact that leadership among black males appears to be temerarious at best. Tim Wells has stated that the males in a group never trust each other completely. Our experiences in the area seem to show that a leader must be constantly proving himself to the group. This proof appears to consist in his physical ability to defend himself, his courage and willingness to accept any challenge to his leadership, his prowess as a "lover" with women, and his fearlessness of encounters with police.

While gaining the friendship of Phil did not materially aid our efforts with the other males in the South Park area, failure to do so would have placed a serious obstacle in the way of our efforts. With Phil's support and presence we could be sure the others would at least listen to our proposals.

In an attempt to engage the interest and cooperation of the males usually to be found in Mirasol Park, we made suggestions about clothing projects involving the making of clothing presently appealing to black youth, food projects, and neighborhood improvement projects. Only the clothing and food projects aroused any obvious interest, but even this interest failed, when it became apparent the projects would be conducted on a continuing basis.

From our theoretical framework elaborated in the preceding chapter, we may state that the failure of interest in a sustained project is due to the general present orientation as well as the relative helplessness experienced by most low-income persons. Attempts to motivate males in the South Park area by emphasizing the future value of present experiences failed for the same reason.

Perhaps the greatest interest expressed by the target population was the desire for a complete park center. By complete they seemed to mean a center with swimming pool, lights for the ball field, more park tables, later night hours for use of center facilities. At the present time centers are closed at 10:30 p.m.

What became increasingly apparent as the weeks passed was the almost complete lack of interest in any organized activities, with the exception of sports. Our experience clearly indicated a lack of aptitude in the target population for sustained organizational relations and activities. Tim Wells put it very well by saying: "Each guy is an individualist. He wants to do his own thing." Victor, a 19-year-old youth of the area, put it this way: "The guys don't really do things as a group. Only things like sports, basketball, are done in groups. Otherwise, each guy is on his own."

In summary, then, our research indicated that the attitudes of black male youth in the South Park area toward whites generally, all adults, and agencies are characterized by hostility, suspicion and distrust. Winning the confidence of group leaders is beneficial primarily in that an obstacle to group acceptance is removed. Temporary interest can be aroused by projects related to food and clothing exemplifying black culture. Sustained interest in continuing projects is almost negligible. The greatest interest can be aroused by an offer of jobs, but even this interest appears conditional.

A-Mountain Area:

The Road Runners Boys' Club of the A-Mountain area was a valuable source of data on the behavior of black males between the ages of 9 and 15. The data in this situation is particularly valuable since it comes from a group that has experienced organizational activities and relations. The club itself had been organized only about two weeks prior to our entry upon the scene by Mrs.----------, an employee of the A-Mountain Area Council. Mrs. ----------welcomed and encouraged our contact with the boys in the club.

Although the members of the club had been exposed to organizational experiences, their capacity for organizational cooperation was poorly developed. The meetings usually lacked any clear direction. No one in the club, including Mrs.----------, seemed to have any concept of defined goals, except to give the boys "something to do." At our first meeting with the boys, the only business discussed was a fund-raising project, a public car-wash.

Throughout the time that we met with the boys, with only one exception, the meetings were noisy and characterized by very short attention spans on the part of the members. Any logical or complete discussion of

proposals or suggestions was usually impossible. The one exception was an occasion when the writer of this report assumed a very authoritarian manner and took over the direction of the meeting. The result of this was that only two boys showed up at the next scheduled meeting time.

Both Mrs.---------- and we decided at the outset to use a nondirective approach with the boys. This approach proved to be ineffective. Subsequent events gave ample evidence of a poorly developed sense of responsibility on the part of the boys, limited capacity for planning activities, and quick discouragement when their plans met obstacles.

The boys eagerly took up our suggestion about a camp-out fishing trip. We volunteered transportation, but indicated that they would have to provide all the other things necessary for the trip. We attempted to provide direction in food planning, which was severely resented by many of the boys, particularly the leader, Robert----------. A directive by the Area Council director that some of the fathers of the boys must accompany us was even more offensive to the boys. Failure to notify us that some fathers had been recruited resulted in postponement of the trip. Our subsequent efforts to plan another trip failed to overcome the general disillusionment, and when the trip finally took place only five boys were recruited with difficulty to go.

Following this experience it was almost impossible to get the boys together for a meeting.

Visits to some of the parents, whom we had not contacted, revealed that the parents had opposed the fishing trip both because it seemed poorly organized and because they had not met us. It became increasingly clear as we talked with the parents that the success of any efforts with black youth of this age group depends very much upon enlisting the aid and support of parents.

The interest of the boys could be most easily aroused by suggestions of outdoor activities, sports, camp-outs, bicycle events, and fund-raising activities. Considerable interest was also expressed in clothing and cooking projects.

The phenomenon called "playing it cool" was already well developed in this age group. "Playing it cool" has been defined by David Schulz as a survival technique which "is an attempt to make yourself interesting and attractive to others so that you are better able to manipulate their behavior along lines that will provide some immediate gratification .....Playing it cool is thus a defense against exploitation."[9] This form of behavior is, thus, an attempt to exploit others while at the same time a method for avoiding exploitation by others. The writer experienced this vividly when he was first persuaded to drive the boys to a Dairy Queen and then subjected to attempts at getting him to treat the boys to ice cream. When the writer discovered the boys' strategy, his remonstrances were met with loud protests denying any attempt at "conning."

The phenomenon of "playing it cool" can easily mislead someone into believing his efforts are being

accepted only to discover a complete lack of cooperation later. Part of "playing it cool" is to say one thing while intending just the opposite.

It is well to remember that the life-style of the low-income black teen-age male is that of the streets, where survival is an ever present concern. Young boys are socialized to the life of the streets very early both by the conditions in which they live and the example of older youth.

A summary of our findings in the A-Mountain area includes the following items. Some organizational experiences and ability are characteristic of the boys, but these are very limited. Self-direction is desired but poorly developed. Expectations not fulfilled quickly result in disinterest and increased distrust. Parental support for area projects is essential. Range of interest in activities is small. The phenomenon of "playing it cool" makes judgment of real interest exceedingly difficult.

Results of Interviews:

This section will serve as a summary of the most pertinent and common results of the formal interviews conducted during the period of the research project.

The interviews were designed to reveal primarily what kinds of projects would probably succeed in eliciting the interest and participation of black teen-age males.

The most commonly mentioned activities which had proved fairly successful in the past were: sports, camp-outs, movies, cooking (as a source of sustenance for hungry youth), pool and other indoor games and dancing (both creative and ballroom).

When asked what activities the respondent would like to see in addition to those already available, the answers included a center that would provide recreation, books, exposure to "blackness," courses in Swahili, programs of speakers and movies; back-yard meetings; money-raising projects, music and health training. It is interesting to note that a number of answers to this particular query were not specific but rather concerned the end results of the projects, for example, "not recreation, but something with competition."

A general conclusion that may be drawn from the interviews is that many activities seem to be available. Many more activities are desired. But the fact remains that really widespread participation in specific projects is rarely in evidence. The established centers are used, but it was not possible to determine accurately the proportion of the population using them. It would appear that a great deal more needs to be done in the area of publicizing activities with the appropriate appeal to interest youth.

Our recommendations, drawn both from the theoretical framework and our own findings, follow in the next chapter.

We Suggest

General Recommendations

Keeping in mind the life-styles of black low-income males and the attitudes characteristic of this social group, the following conclusions and recommendations immediately become evident:

1. The alternatives for action of low-income persons are limited not so much because alternatives are not available, but primarily because low-income persons either are not aware of the alternatives or do not perceive the courses of action open to them as alternatives.

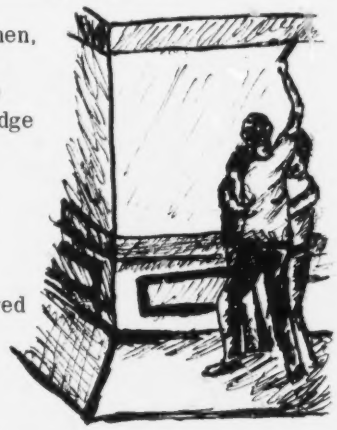
Lack of awareness can be overcome by an effective program of public relations or communications. It must be remembered that the poor, generally, do not pick up most of their information by reading or by recourse to mass media. Therefore, the communications directed toward the poor will be most effective, if they are channeled through the informal network of communications that exists in every community. This means basically that the information must be given in person-to-person, face-to-face encounters. The mass media should, of course, also be utilized.

Failure to perceive courses of action as alternatives is due primarily to lack of successful experiences with a variety of courses of action. A program designed for the poor should include a variety of projects providing new experiences. The projects should be of

such a nature that they will present a challenge, but success will not depend upon effort beyond the capabilities of those participating in the projects. These capabilities cannot be measured by middle-class standards.

2. The poor frequently experience helplessness because of their lack of knowledge and skills, which results in a lack of bargaining power. A program designed for the poor should, therefore, contain projects which produce new knowledge and skills in the target population. The new knowledge and skills should be of such a nature that they provide the individual with a salable commodity. In other words, the knowledge and skills should be in demand in the larger society.

A reminder is essential here. According to our hypothesis, increasing knowledge and skills without a corresponding increase in utility for the knowledge and skills will result in frustration leading either to withdrawal or anger and, possibly, violence.



It should be clear, then, that provision must be made for the use of the newly acquired knowledge and skills. Otherwise, it might be wiser to forego the production of such abilities.

3. The poor are deprived because, among other reasons, they lack the resources to take advantage of opportunities. We have discussed provision of some of the resources above. Here we wish to stress that projects for the poor should not be costly and, if possible, free. For example, a photography project in which the participants must provide their own cameras and film is beyond the capabilities of the poor. Either such a project should not be initiated at all, or the equipment should be provided by the agency.

4. Insecurity is part of the life-style of the poor. Insecurity is bred in people who feel that their life-events are unpredictable due to their lack of control over their environment. A program directed toward the poor should, therefore, be so designed that the participants experience maximum control over their own efforts.

This means, in practical terms, that at every step of the way the participants should share, to some degree, in the decision-making process of the program. Moreover, when decisions are made, it should be clear to the participants why the decision was reached and the superior advantages of the decision for the participants. Organizations frequently make decisions because they are advantageous to the organization. The primary concern of programs for the poor must be the poor themselves.

When the poor experience a measure of control over their own efforts, some of their attitude of fatalism will be counteracted.

5. The poor are, generally, oriented to the present. Immediate gratification is usually more attractive than deferred gratification. As often as possible, projects for the poor should provide immediate satisfaction and results for the participants. If the project is of a continuing nature, it should be broken into phases, such that each phase upon completion provides its own satisfaction, even if the entire project is never completed.

6. Authoritarianism characterizes much of the experience of low-income persons. They are relatively unaccustomed to participating fully in democratic procedures.

Decisions are usually made for them rather than with them or by them.

The initial stages of a program directed toward the poor will be characterized mainly by initiative and direction coming from those in charge of the program. At first most decisions will be made by those in charge. However, gradually this initiative, direction, and decision-making must be transferred to the participants. Since this transference is a critical and often precarious process, directors of the projects must be carefully chosen or trained to carry out this process effectively.

7. Finally, the projects should be concrete. The participants must be able to see or apprehend clearly the results of their efforts. It is advisable that the projects be of such a nature that the effects of participation are immediately evident. It is for this reason that cooking or clothing projects stimulate interest. The products can be immediately seen and either eaten or worn.

In summary, we may simply say: begin where people are and move at their own pace of development.

Recommendations for Procedure:

How one goes about introducing a program for the poor is of the utmost importance. Mistakes made in the very beginning can spell disaster for the continuation of the program or, at best, can be overcome only with great difficulty. From our findings we make the following suggestions:

1. Leadership
   a. The leader personnel of the program should be recruited from the target area, whenever this is possible. It is these people who have experienced the precise social and physical conditions of the target population. They live within the area and so serve as ever-present models for the residents. Their presence in the area makes them more accessible than nonresidents. With their experience, they are usually more reliable in making judgments about the effectiveness of the program.

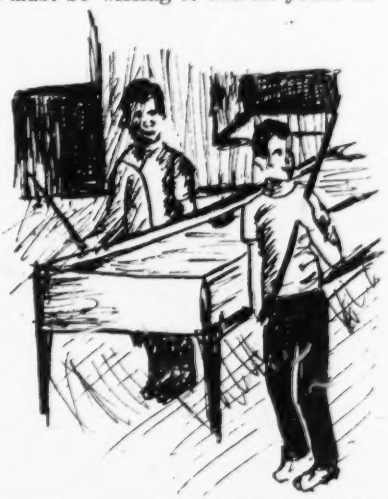
   b. The leader positions should be paid positions. Programs for the poor are time consuming and severely tax the mental and emotional resources of personnel. These should be compensated for.

      Moreover, since the setting of the poor is basically one of survival, the poor generally have neither the emotional resources nor the time for volunteer activities. As was pointed out before, the value system of the poor subordinates leisure-time activities to material gain. Volunteer work is a leisure-time activity.

      Furthermore, paid personnel give greater assurance to a consistent continuing program. Few things will endanger a program so much as frequent loss of personnel or the unpredictability of the workers' presence at appointed times.

   c. A training program should be set up for leaders. This will acquaint the leaders with the nature of their functions. It will also provide a preliminary test for the appropriateness of the program by getting the reactions and suggestions of those who are in training.

2. Recruitment of participants
   a. The leaders must be willing to recruit youth on a person-to-person basis. If one wishes to attract youth to a program, he must be willing to go first of all to the places where youth naturally gather.



   Other media of communication should be utilized but nothing will be more effective than face-to-face encounters.

   b. The natural leaders among groups of youth must be sought out. Their confidence, trust, and cooperation must be cultivated. Gaining the cooperation of these leaders may not bring in the other members of the group, but failure to do so will almost surely keep the members of the group out.

   c. Enlist the aid and support of the parents of the area. Keep them informed of all the progress of the program, and accept their suggestions or help when they offer such things. Do not, however, involve the parents so much that the youth become resentful and lose their sense of self-direction.

   d. Make no promises that cannot be quickly and surely kept. Unfulfilled promises merely reinforce the distrust and disillusionment that is present to begin with.

e. At first keep organizational procedures to a minimum. As we have pointed out, the youth of low-income areas have a limited capacity for organizational procedures and relationships. Do not, at first, make great demands about punctuality, regularity, or order. On the other hand, be careful not to convey an attitude of unconcern. Teen-age males of low-income areas must always be sure that those in the program care about the participants.

If the projects are designed to take into account the needs and interests of the participants, continuing participation will tend to follow naturally.

Two Final Recommendations

It would appear that the most viable program requires the use of a center. Low-income youth generally have a great deal of time during which they are looking for something to do. Many of the youth are drop-outs from school. Most are unemployed. A center providing many and continuous activities geared to the life-style and needs of low-income youth is a locus to which the young male will feel free to migrate. Such a center is, of course, an expensive proposition. An alternative would be to utilize extensively the facilities of an already existing center. But nothing will be so effective as a center designed precisely for this program.

At the same time that use is made of a center, the program should provide for taking projects into the homes, back-yards, parks and other areas of the neighborhood. There will always be some youth who, for various reasons, will not come to a center. The program must be taken to these.

The second suggestion is that an attempt be made to fit the youth program into the overall program for depressed communities, such as Model Cities. Model Cities is a program designed to affect all areas of the life-styles of the poor. Any program directed toward one sector of the poor will benefit immensely by close cooperation with such a comprehensive program as Model Cities.

Conclusion

We recognize that the recommendations we have made in this report are sweeping and, sometimes, radical. We are aware that implementation of these recommendations would be time-consuming, complex, and costly. But, we are also very much aware of the nature of the low-income life-conditions. Halfway measures may satisfy the need many people feel to meet the problems of the poor, but they do little to help the poor, and often do more harm than good. It is our considered opinion that, if the decision is made to provide a youth program for black teen-age males of low-income urban areas, no effort should be spared to meet the real life-needs of such youth.

Footnotes

[1]A summary of the results of the formal interviews and samples of the questions asked are contained in the original report of this study.

[2]Berelson, Bernard, and Gary A. Steiner, ed., Human Behavior; An Inventory of Scientific Findings, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., N.Y., 1964, pp. 536-537.

[3]Lewis, Oscar. "Poverty as a Source of Lower-Class Sub-culture" in Comparative Perspectives on Marriage and the Family by H. Kent Geiger, p. 217.

[4]Safa, Helen I., "The Poor Are Like Everyone Else, Oscar" in *Psychology Today*, Vol. 4, No. 4, September, 1970, pp. 26-32. Also see Lola M. Irelan and Arthur Besner, "Low-Income Outlook on Life" in *Low-Income Life Styles*, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, pp. 1-12.

[5]Green, Edward, "Race, Social Status, and Criminal Arrest" in *American Sociological Review*, pp. 476-490.

[6]Simpson, George E. and Milton Yinger, *Racial and Cultural Minorities*, Third Edition, Harper & Row, N.Y., pp. 348-354.

[7]Irelan, Lola M. and Besner, Arthur, op. cit., pp. 1-3.

[8]Schulz, David A., *Coming Up Black*, pp. 59-104.

[9]Ibid., p. 78.